Claims

1. (currently amended) An improved sponge applicator for coating a liquid onto the outside surface of containers comprising an open cell foam having a plurality of surface sections, at least one surface section designed to contact a portion of the container, said at least one surface section open to the flow of liquid there through, ~~at least one sealed~~ all other surface areas of said improved sponge sealed to prevent ~~for retarding~~ flow of liquid ~~from the sponge~~ there through and wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open cell structure of the internal area of said sponge, and including injection means for injecting coating liquid into said internal area of said sponge applicator.

2. (currently amended) The sponge of claim 1 having at least two unsealed surfaces for contacting the container with the sponge ~~with one of~~ the first of said at least two unsealed surface sections for contacting a first portion of said container and a second of said at least two unsealed surface sections for contacting a second portion of said container ~~designed to contact a different portion of the container than the other unsealed section and the at least one sealed surfaceretards flow of liquid from the sponge and wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open cell structure of the sponge~~.

3. (withdrawn) A method of sealing surfaces of a swellable open-cell foam comprising swelling the foam with liquid, expelling excess liquid and applying a sealant to the surface of the foam while the foam is still in its swelled shape.

4. (currently amended) An improved contact coating apparatus comprising a means for rotating a container to be coated, a sponge coating applicator having ~~several sealed surfaces and~~ at least one unsealed surface open to the flow of liquid there through and all other surfaces of said sponge coating applicator sealed to prevent flow of fluid there through, means for contacting the container with ~~an~~ said a least one unsealed surface of the sponge coating applicator, and means for supplying coating liquid to the sponge coating applicator, and injection means for injecting liquid into said sponge.

5. (currently amended) The improved apparatus of claim 4 having at least two sponge coating applicators with ~~one~~ a first sponge coating ~~applicators~~ applicator positioned to contact a bottle being coated by the apparatus at a ~~different~~ first portion of the bottle ~~than another~~ and a second sponge coating applicator positioned to contact a bottle being coated by the apparatus at a second portion of the bottle.

6. (previously presented) The improved apparatus of claim 4 wherein said container is a glass or plastic bottle.

7. (currently amended) The improved apparatus of claim 4 wherein the sponge coating applicator comprises an open cell foam ~~having a plurality of surface sections, at least one surface section designed to contact a portion of the container, at least one sealed surface for retarding flow of liquid from the sponge and~~ wherein the sponge has an internal porosity allowing for flow of liquid through the open internal cell structure of the sponge.